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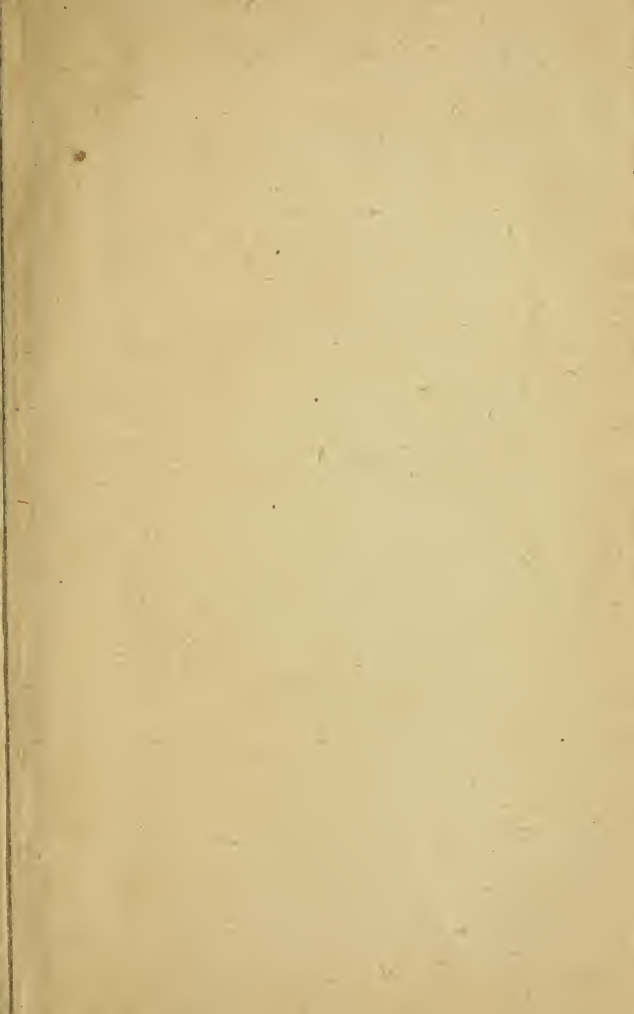
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NAIRN,
A POEM,
FOUNDED ON FACT;
WITH NOTES & ANECDOTES,
ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF
THE NATIVES OF NAIRN, OR STRATHORDE, IN
PERTSHIRE, IN THE XVIII. CENTURY.

BY JAMES ANDERSON.

P E R T H :

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1825.

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PREFACE.

THE Author of the following pages had, when he first entered on the subject, no idea of offering them to the public in the form they now bear. He was not in possession of any information but what he derived from the common tradition of the country. But since finishing the Poem, he has had an opportunity of getting a considerable addition to his knowledge on the subject. Of this knowledge the limits of the Publication will not permit him to avail himself, at least to any extent. Should this attempt meet with that success, which the favourable manner in which his proposals of Publishing have been received, gives him reason to expect, he may at a future period, give the public some of those romantic Legends, which are so deservedly popular to the north and west of Perth.

Many of these are already incomplete, and the time is not far distant, when these stories, unless collected, will be entirely forgotten.

In hopes of rescuing a small portion of them, for a short time from the general wreck, and

perhaps inducing some abler individual to attempt the affair, he has presumed to offer these pages to the public; trusting their good nature will make them overlook any deficiencies in the execution.

BRIGHT Phoebus' last and glimm'ring ray,
On lofty tow'r and turret grey,
To stream and lawn, to hill and dell,
Had beam'd a short, a sweet farewell.
With slow, but certain pace the night
Crept onward, and dispell'd the light ;
While Earn's chiefs, at festive board,
Sat with Strathallan's noble Lord :
For many a princely chieftain there,
That night the baron's feast did share,
And 'mid their wine, held deep discourse
How, that where Almond holds its course,
And pours, with rapid force, its flood
From rock to rock thro' Methven wood, (1)
A Robber dwelt, who by his sword,
Of that wide forest live'd the lord.
Yet such his power, and such his fame,
That none could his fierce spirit tame,
Thus, long disdaining force or law
The country round he kept in awe ;

And yet no champion, had been found,
Could make him quit an inch of ground ;
While thus they talked, the Castle clock
Rung ten, and soon the assembly broke ;
For horse, and servants, loud the call
Resounded thro' the crouded hall.
'Twas then Strathallan urged the stay
Of Nairn's lord, whose dreary way
Lay thro the wood, and 'cross the stream,
Where in a cave, or rifted seam,
The robber dwelt: and still by night,
And often too in broad day light
Did haunt the road, and thro' rude force
The traveller robb'd, on foot or horse
Who pass'd that way, nor would he take
Advantage mean, but still would stake
His life, in combat fair, with those
Who singly dar'd his arm oppose.
On those by his strong arm o'erthrown,
Pity, or mercy, he had none,

Yet some stout hearts the fight had dar'd,
 They fell, and none the bandit spar'd.
 This Nairn heard, and well he knew,
 The Bandit equall'd was by few,
 Yet his proud heart with vengeance boil'd,
 To think his country's youth were foil'd,
 And basely forc'd their fame to yield,
 And to the Bandit quit the field.
 Resolv'd he was, the road to take,
 And for his own, and country's sâke,
 The robber tame, or nobly fall,
 And never view his princely hall,
 So finely grand on Orde side,
 Where, in the pomp of feudal pride
 O'er many a vassal he held sway. (2)
 Between the Grampians and the Tay.
 His beautiful, his fine domain
 Lay widely spread o'er many a plain;
 Of noble mind, of body strong,
 Renown'd in Scotland's annals long

His sires had been ; (3) and oft the son
Had deeds of boldest daring done,
Which to his friends and foes bespoke
The scion true of such a stock.
In vain Strathallan keenly prest
With hospitable warmth his guest,
And urg'd as reasons he should stay,
The length, and dangers of the way ;
The robber's strength, and savage life.
His desp'rate success in the strife
With some, whom Nairn knew were brave,
And yet their lives they could not save.
The gallant Ireland, so they tell,
Beneath his desp'rate weapon fell, (4)
And yet his friends, though wise and strong,
Could not revenge their brother's wrong.
" When next we meet " stout Nairn said
" That robber shall have closed his raid."
" But if beneath his hand you fall ? "
" Why, there's an end of me, that's all,

“And you shall raise your vassals then
“To hunt the savage from his den.”
This said, he slack’d the courser’s rein,
And bounded swiftly o’er the plain.
One hardy servant, tried and true,
Swiftly his footsteps did pursue;
Nor did they their fleet horses check,
Nor once did Nairn silence break,
Till the deep Earn’s stream was past,
And then his eye he backward cast,
“Come onward Clarke, for soon must I
“A Bout with this fam’d robber try, (5)
“How far is’t ken ye to his haunt?”
“Not far my Lord, but sure you’ll grant
“’Tis folly in th’ extreme, for you
“To tempt the rage of Callum Dhu;
“A savage wretch, who at one blow,
“The bravest swordsman can lay low;
“We ne’er shall see our home again,
“But surely by his hand be slain.”

“ Stop, coward, stop, and if you fear,
“ By heavens, you may stay trembling here,
“ But hand to hand his strength I’ll try,
“ And if I fall, know how to die.”
“ No, Nairn, no,”—his man replied,
“ We’ve often conquer’d side by side ;
“ Nor shall you now deserted be,
“ I’ll die ere from your side I flee.”
Then on they rode with fleet career,
Until fam’d Methven wood they near.
Now dashing o’er its rocky shore,
The flooded Almond sounds before ;
The forest now appears in view,
Where lofty Oak, where Pine and Yew,
Waft, by the full moon’s midnight beam,
Their darken’d shades across the stream.
Still is the night, no quiv’ring breeze
Shakes the dark foliage of the trees,—
No sound amid the gloom is heard,
Save ringdoves from their roosting scar’d,

Till loud th' echoing rocks repeat
 The sounds, made by the horses' feet ;
 And the lone owl, with hollow voice,
 Joins loudly in th' unusual noise ;
 For never since that cloudless night,
 When her fond dam first urg'd her flight,
 (Yet six cold winters past had sped,
 Since first she made yon Yew her bed,)
 Had sound of mortal foot been heard
 By night, upon the thick'ning sward,
 Which clothes the path so often trode,
 Ere yon fierce Outlaw took the road,
 Nor scarce by day durst man presume
 To tempt the forest's thicken'd gloom ;
 His giant strength and fearless heart
 Had often made the stoutest smart ;
 For since the spring last deck'd the plain,
 Had six bold youths, by him been slain.
 The horsemen now have reach'd the wood,
 A moment in his stirrups stood

The fearless lord, and then with eye
Keen as the falcon, when on high
With level wing he lightly soars,
And for his prey the brake explores,
He scann'd the silent servant's face,
To see what thoughts he there could trace,
His eye was calm, no palsied fear,
No feverish dread was painted there,
Then Nairn spurr'd the noble steed,
And down the pathway rode with speed,
His eye thro' ev'ry thicket glanc'd,
As on the gallant courser pranc'd ;
The servant follows in the rear,
And now, they can distinctly hear
The rushing sound of water fall,
And soon they reach a rugged wall
Of hardest rock, whilst fragments grey
Lie scatter'd 'mongst the foam and spray ;
The wood gives way, and finely spread
Before them lies a lovely glade,

And o'er a cluster'd grove of Pines,
The moon with double lustre shines.
Upon the rock loud footsteps ring,
And instant, with a sudden spring,
As lights the raven from the rock,
The Bandit came ; and fiercely spoke ;
“ Stand, dastard, stand, or else you'll rue
“ The hour you've met with Callum Dhu,
“ Stop,—hold, no moving.—fellow, know
“ That none dare thro' this forest go,
“ But those who my permission buy
“ With all they have ;” “ none else ?” “ oh aye !
“ There's those who are so bold as stand
“ The force of this unconquer'd brand ;
“ Be not deceiv'd, there's many a year
“ Since I have liv'd unconquer'd here,
“ Some in that time my strength have tried,
“ And all have by this weapon died.”
“ Then Bandit know, nor goods nor coin
“ You ever shall possess of mine,

“For whilst my hand can wield my sword,

“That weapon shall defend its lord.”

This said, he from the saddle sprung,

And on the ground his cloak he flung,

Then in his strong, his hardy hand

He grasp'd his oft-tried trusty brand ;

For in the island men were rare,

Who durst the dauntless Nairn dare

In battled field, or private feud.

His tenants he had oft rescued

From plund'ring raid, when spoilers bold,

Without remorse, swept byre and fold ;

When chieftain against chieftain fought,

Till both were to destruction brought ;

When force was law, nor right nor wrong

Was minded, if the clan was strong ;

When rapine stalk'd with unveil'd face,

When murder was thought no disgrace.

In times like these was Nairn bred,

And oft the foeman's blood had shed,

Yet ne'er till now could mortal spy
A tremor in his dauntless eye.
And well the awful Bandit might
The boldest, stoutest heart affright ;
His limbs were large, of giant make,
His brawny arms, like twigs could shake
The forest Pines ; his breast was bare,
Or only cloth'd with clotted hair ;
His form was large, his visage wild
As tiger, when in thicket coild,
It spies the poor, unwary prey
Advancing in the dangerous way ;
His look the angry bull-dog's scowl ;
His voice the hungry lion's howl ;
Thus frowning like the stormy north,
He drew his dreadful weapon forth,
Well fitted to his awful strength,
Was the strong blade's uncommon length.
Then hand to hand, in furious strife,
To fail was death, the prize was life.

They fiercely clos'd ; their weapons' clang
O'er rock and thicket loudly rang.
As falls the axe upon the oak,
The Bandit plied each heavy stroke ;
But well the guard did Nairn know,
To parry ev'ry thrust and blow,
Yet thrice they clos'd in contest keen,
And thrice Lord Nairn's blood was seen ;
Nor 'scap'd his foe unhurt, for well
Did Nairn's sword his prowess tell.
Across the Bandit's arm his blade
A deep and hideous gash has made :
Dark scowl'd his eye, but word or groan
Declar'd not that his strength was gone,
Altho' 'twas plain to Nairn's lord
His arm could scarcely wield his sword.
He strove the contest to renew,
But from his grasp the weapon flew,
And, then with desp'rate strength, he broke
A rifted splinter from the rock,

And ere his dire intent he knew,
The massy stone at Nairn threw.
It miss'd him, else that dreadful cast
Had made that midnight hour his last ;
While for another bending low,
He dealt the Bandit such a blow,
The sword thro' bone and sinews drave;
As cleaves the vessels prow the wave ;
Off flew the head, the lifeless trunk,
With hollow sound, beside it sunk.
'Twas strange to see the sever'd head
Wear dreadful frown when life had fled ;
Then Nairn cast his chasten'd eye
On rock, on wood, on moon and sky ;
For though successful in the strife,
His skill had scarcely sav'd his life.
His dauntless soul receiv'd a check
When light the weapon graz'd his neck ;
Altho' each guard and pass he knew,
The Bandit's sword had cleft in two

The silver clasp, with which was bound
His collar band ;—as from the ground
His cloak he took, the crimson stream
Fast trickling in the moon's pure beam,
Between him and the grass he saw ;
The wound he felt, with heighten'd awe,
No simple cut, the weapon's point
Had enter'd nigh the shoulder joint.
The servant soon in bandage tight
Has wrapt the wound, that so he might
His master's flowing blood restrain,
Which now had dyed the grassy plain.
This done, in a clear glassy fount
They wash, and then their steeds remount ;
Then off at swiftest pace they sped,
And with them take the robber's head ;
Nor did they once their horses rein
Until they reach'd their own domain,
When glimm'ring thro' the trees they spied
Their Mansion, Perthshire's boast and pride.

NOTES.

- (1) "And pours with rapid force its flood,
"From rock to rock thro' Methven wood."

Those who have not seen the romantic situation here alluded to, can have but a very inadequate conception of its appearance. The forest at the present moment is large, dark, and gloomy, and at the era in question was considerably more so. The Almond rushing from rock to rock with the impetuosity of a Grampian torrent, tends much to give the situation a very delightful appearance,—A place like this was well fitted for, and often was the retreat of those, who had set the laws of their country at defiance.—This place was sometimes too, the residence of recluses of a more amiable character; as Bessy Bell and Mary Gray, who died and are interred there. To visit their graves is reckoned a very fashionable amusement for a summer evening, in that part of the country.

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- (2) "O'er many a vassal he held sway."

The estates of this noble and ancient family, were then very extensive, comprehending more than is now

included in the estate, which then was and is sometimes still, called Nairn. Their vassals were of consequence numerous, and their influence over them greater than the most part of the inhabitants of Perthshire can, at the present day, believe.

This influence had decreased much, in the course of the Thirty years which elapsed between the Rebellions of 15 and 45. Lord Nairn was kept a considerable time a State Prisoner, on account of rising in the year 15, and many stories are told of the hardships he suffered during his confinement.

His Tenants, had at that time, an opportunity of being convinced that, there were others, (and those more powerful than their Lord,) who had a right to their obedience and service.

Lady Nairn had the address to procure her husband's enlargement ; many romantic accounts are still given of the manner in which she effected his deliverance, with these the limits of this Publication will not permit the Author to interfere. Nairn did not however long survive his release ; his constitution being broke by long and rigid confinement. Lady Nairn appears to have managed all the family affairs for a long time previous to the year 45 ; notwithstanding her misfortunes, she appears to have been warmly attached to the unfortunate and misled House of Stuart ; nor, is

this attachment difficult to be accounted for in an imperious haughty feudal superior, who looked on every extension of freedom as so many encroachments upon that power and privilege, which was more valued than the pecuniary emoluments to be derived from the estate, and which indeed almost placed the possessor without the reach of the laws of that country of which he was a member.

(3) "Renown'd in Scotland's annals long
 "His sires had been."

The family of Nairn were long famed for bodily strength, and a noble and chivalrous disposition. Situated as they were on the borders of the Highlands, they were often forced to repel the incursions of their warlike neighbours. The country to the south and west of their estate was in the possession of a number of small proprietors, who were unable to defend themselves from the depredations of these mountain marauders, otherwise than by putting themselves under the protection of their more potent neighbour.

(4) "Come onward Clarke, for soon must I
 "A bout with this fam'd robber try."

Clarke, was the surname of a family who lived on the estate of Nairn for a very considerable number of years; one of them who was in the rebellion in 1745, lived on a farm on the estate till his death. I have often sat with the greatest pleasure, whilst the men in the neighbourhood who were acquainted with him, repeated some of his stories, which tend to throw light on that period of Scottish history, when the passions and prejudices of men were called into full activity.

When the Prince called at Nairn on his way to the south, the tenants were raised, and all capable of bearing arms were marched off to join a small body which was stationed in Perth. But they had either felt, or heard of the hardships endured in 1715, when as now they had been obliged to join the Prince. Of the whole of the numerous vassals on the estate, only three or four reached Perth, the others having found means to desert by the way.

Clarke however scorned to leave his Lord, and stayed a number of days in Perth, until some of his friends found, and forced him home. He brought his arms home with him, and hid them in a furrow of a newly ploughed field, where they continued till destroyed by rust. Another of the Nairn tenants who went to Perth, was called Littlejohn; he with some

others had taken possession of the Council House, where they were attacked by some Loyalists, and one of their French Officers killed. Oliphant of Gask was one of the party, he stood in a corner and loaded the muskets; Littlejohn, who discharged them, bawling out at the same time, "Load ye, Oliphant, and I'll fire."

Lady Nairn, who appears to have been a woman of good abilities, was straining every nerve to induce her tenants to set off to join the Prince; when Littlejohn who had deserted, arrived and informed her that a townsman named John Gorrie, had rolled a cask of Gunpowder to the arch which forms the entrance to the Fish-market, and was in the act of applying a match to it when he was observed, and shot. On hearing this, Lady Nairn stated that she would give a farm rent free to whoever had done it, Littlejohn held up his hand, saying, there, Madam, is the very hand that did it; there's the hand that did it. This past off, Lady Nairn was obliged to flee; and a party of Hessian Dragoons was stationed in the vicinity of Nairn House. Littlejohn and a William Gorrie were employed to drive a load of straw to their horses, Gorrie, (whose waggeries are proverbial) when passing the tents of the Hessians looked back, and asked his companion what he had done with the hand that shot John Gorrie; poor Littlejohn, while he trembled at every

limb, begged him to have pity on him, and not expose him to certain destruction.

- (5) "The gallant Ireland, so they tell,
"Beneath his desp'rate weapon fell."

The Irelands, of Milnhole, flourished much in the legends of the natives of Logiealmond. They were not only said to be strong, but very deeply skilled in knowledge of that kind which flourishes so much in Scottish story; and which the possessor was supposed to have received from beings of another world. In short, it was reckoned very dangerous, "for gentle or simple," to contradict them, but it appears that Callum Dhu either did not know, or at least did not care for their supernatural abilities. The Reader will perhaps not be displeased to see the following very old Ballad which I have lately been favoured with by a gentleman, whose knowledge in the history of the families who possessed the estates on the Almond, Shochy, and Orde, is very extensive. This gentleman is in possession of Packs, Receipts, and other Papers, at least One Hundred and Fifty years old. I wrote the Song in the manner he dictated it, but I am afraid it is incomplete. Several of my acquaintances recollect of having heard it sung, and all concur in stating the air to be very interesting.

SONG,

The Justice defeated ;

OR,

IRELAND'S ESCAPE FROM EDINBURGH.

There were seven Oys into Milnhole,
It was weel kend they evil did,
They dipped their hands among innocent bluid;
And kill'd gentle John Crichton, the laird of Kin-
vaid.

They are on to Edinburgh town,
Nae laws could touch them here ava,
And three o' them were guilty found,
And four o' them hae won awa.

C.

Up an' spak then William Ireland's mither;
 An' aye an angry woman was she,
 "There'll be little Justice in the land,
 "If an Ireland for a Crichton die:"

Then up an' spak John Crichton's wife,
 An' aye a waefu' woman was she,
 "The Ireland's bluid is gentle enough,
 "But John Crichton was aye as dear to me."

* * * * *

Then up an' spak William Ireland's mither,
 An' aye an angry woman was she,

"Oh! dinna ye mind, sir," she said,
 "When ye lay in yon prison strang,
 "When I stole the keys o' the prison door,
 "An' aye sae quietly's I let ye gang;

“Now, ye’re the Judge o’ my three sons,
“An’ a cruel Judge ye’re like to be.”
“Now for thae words that ye hae spoken,
“You and your three sons shall die.”

Up an’ spak William Ireland then,
An’ aye an angry man was he,
“If I die, I’ll die but ance,
“An’ bragged by nae man I will be.”

Then he has drawn a guid sma’ sword,
He’s drawn it from a narrow cane,
He’s struck the Justice o’er the breast,
A little bencath the collar-bane;

He jumped the Bartisn, thirty feet high,
An’ thro’ the water he lightly swam,
An’ ere they got their little boats drawn,
He’d got three lang miles before them.

Then he climb'd up to a high tree head,
'Twas a' to look what he could see,
An' there he saw his lordship comin',
Wi' many in his company.

Some were ridin', an' some were rinnin',
An' some were in their coaches, sae free;
Oh alas! said poor William Ireland,
There's peace in Scotland, but nane for me.

Then he's thrown aff his gude grey coat,
For the heat o' it he cou'dna thole,
An' wi' linen shirt an' doublet blue,
Upon them a' he's won Milnhole.

But when he cam into Milnhole,
He hadna peace to stay there ava,

* * * * *
* * * * *

To the west I'll bend my course,
In the highlands of Scotland I'll remain,
An' the saugh tree shall be seven times budded
Before that I return again.

The common people are of opinion that a seven years absence, in those days, was sufficient to free a man from the punishment due to the greatest crimes.

(6) "When glimm'ring thro' the trees they spied,
"Their mansion, Perthshire's boast and pride."

The House of Nairn was very lately built, not having been entirely finished in the interior when the Rebellion broke out, and put a period to further improvement. The old House was consumed by fire. It was situated on a beautiful, elevated situation, a little to the west of the new site, which was on a fine plain in the immediate vicinity of the Orde. A few years ago, the present Farmer had most of the foundation of both Houses taken up to build fences. A large stone was found in the ruins of the old House, with some letters and figures, of which 16,—only could be distinguished.

The old House I have reason to believe was called Strathorde; the gentleman mentioned in a former note, has a Lease signed by a Sir Robert Nairn of Strathorde, and another dated a considerable time after, is given at Nairn House. It appears that the name of the Estate was changed between the dates of the Leases. The new House was a very splendid building; there are said to have been Three hundred and sixty-five doors and windows in it,—the expence of building must have been great. An ancestor of the above gentleman used

to state that she was "woman mickle" before the foundation was laid, and she lived to see the whole of it levelled with the ground. The size of the building may be guessed from the fact, that sixty masons were constantly employed in the building for three years. The nearest Ale-house was at Loak, and there the men went regularly every Saturday evening, where they were treated at Lord Nairn's expence. The articles of the repast were always prepared for sixty men, every Saturday, for three years; every man receiving a large oat scone or cake, a salt herring, and a pint of ale. Whisky at that time was rarely used.

When the present Proprietor determined to demolish this very beautiful building, he sold it to the company who had lately taken Luncarty Bleachfield; who again sold the whole of it in small lots, beginning at the top, and selling one room after another, rescuing the stones to build some of their new bleaching houses. In this manner was the country, through the caprice of an individual, deprived of one of its greatest ornaments. I am informed that the Clock and Weathercock on the Spire of the Hospital at Perth, was originally on Nairn House.

The very imperfect manner in which I have noticed the affairs of Nairn, I can only account for by the very

small size of the Publication ; indeed, out of such a mass of old traditions, I was obliged not to select the best, but that, which detached from the rest, could be best understood.

It may not be amiss to state here, for the information of such of my readers as are not acquainted with the district of Nairn or Strathorde, that it is situated between five and a half and ten miles north of Perth, extending from the River Tay to Glenshie.

The Orde, after traversing it from west to east, falls into the Tay at Luncarty. It is almost unnecessary to add, that, this very beautiful and rich Estate was confiscated in 1745 ; the Proprietor having engaged very deeply in all the schemes of the Jacobites at that period. The family at that time appear, from some papers I have seen, to have been in great pecuniary distress, no doubt, occasioned in a great measure by the building of their new Mansion. They had contracted debts to a considerable extent, which, at the breaking out of the insurrection, had not been discharged. The consequence was, that, the creditors were clamorous for the sale of the Estate, that they might be paid out of the proceeds. The heir was then in France, and Government, after the first alarm had subsided, had begun to return some of the confiscated Estates,

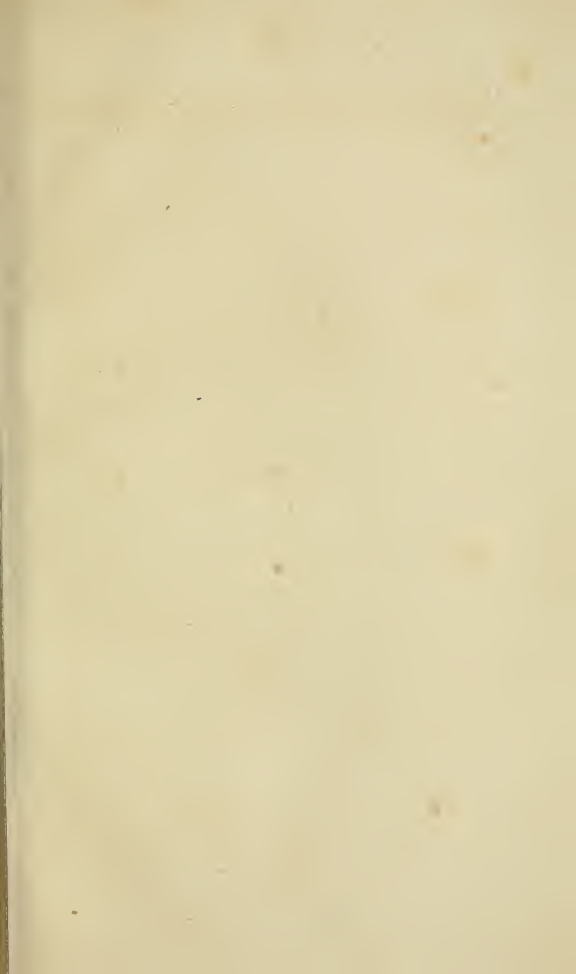
and to connive at the measures which the friends of the owners of others took to purchase their possessions at sales, where the good dispositions of their neighbours kept them from outbidding them. Many of these Estates were purchased for the Proprietors at a mere trifle, compared with their real value. And such was the noble mindedness of the greater part of the whigs of that time, that, instead of having any deep rooted animosity to their unfortunate countrymen, scarcely any of them betrayed their confidence; although by doing so, they might have kept the Estates they had purchased far below their value, at a public sale.

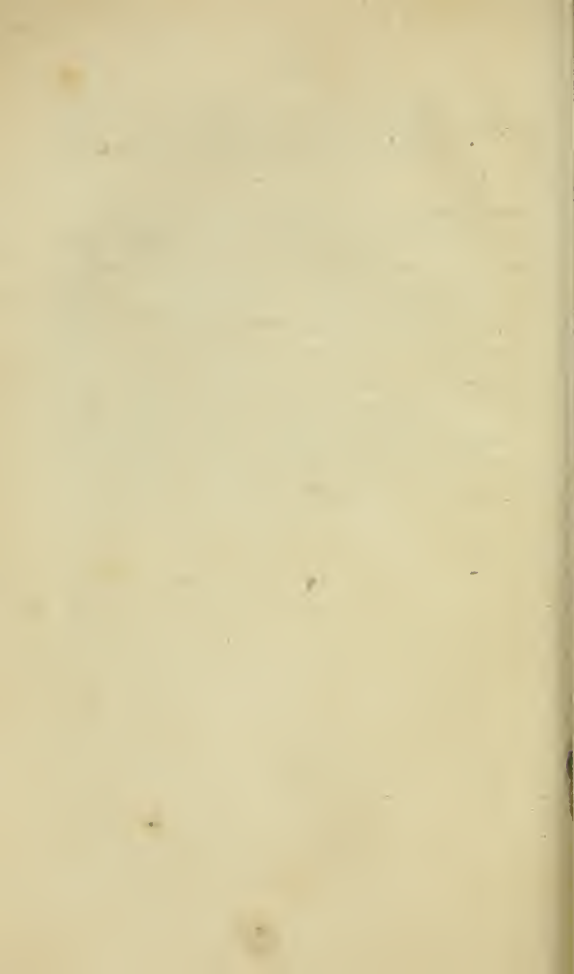
Unfortunately for Lord Nairn he was doomed to be disappointed when he thought himself in possession of the inheritance of his fathers. He had entered the place of sale along with a nobleman, who was not only his neighbour, but his relation; and report says, he did so in expectation of having his Estate purchased for him by his friend. He did purchase the Estate for a mere trifle, the bystanders immediately congratulated him on the recovery of his friend's Estate, but, to their astonishment, he told them, the Estate was his, that he had bought, and meant to pay it.

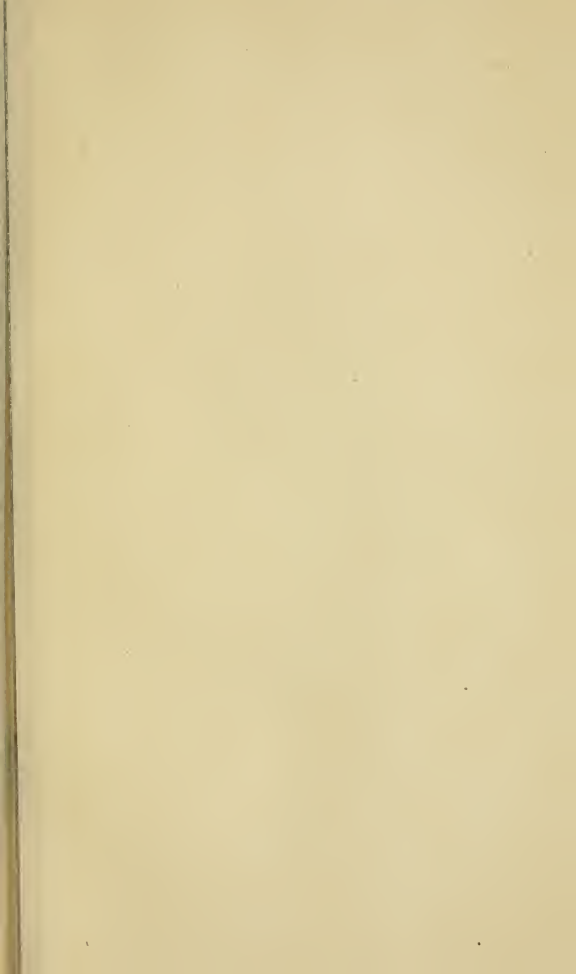
The independent and high-minded nobles felt the stain which such proceedings brought on them, but

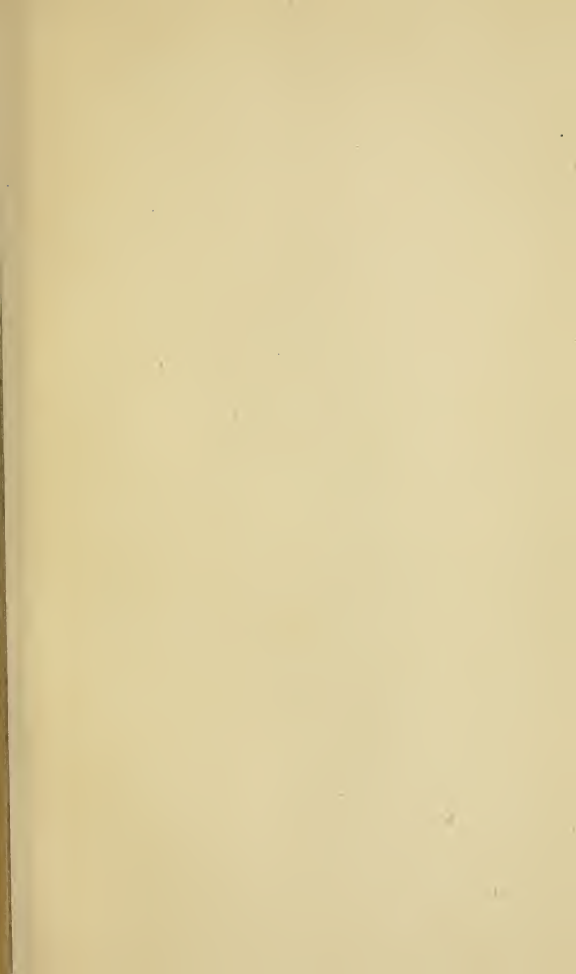
there was no remedy, and the Nairn family were left without a single acre of their best possession.

The Government of George IV. among many other acts of the most liberal policy, has taken off the attainders of most of the noblemen who lost their titles along with Nairn, in 1745. But as these noblemen, chiefly through the influence of their friends, and the lenity of Government, had retained their Estates, they will be able to maintain their dignity, while Nairn must struggle against many inconveniences, unless some lucrative post is assigned him, which is the sincere wish of as many of the tenants of his old Estate as I have heard speak on the subject.





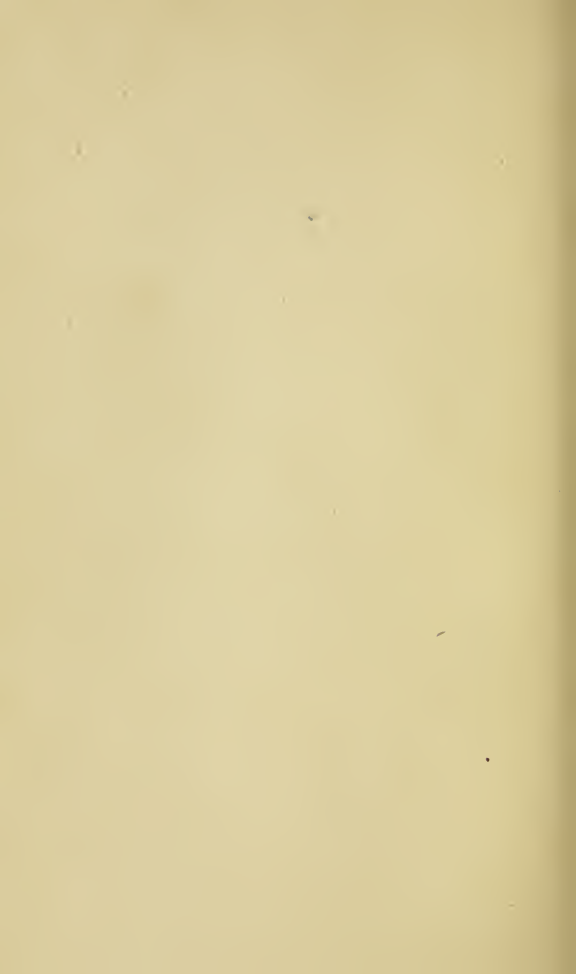


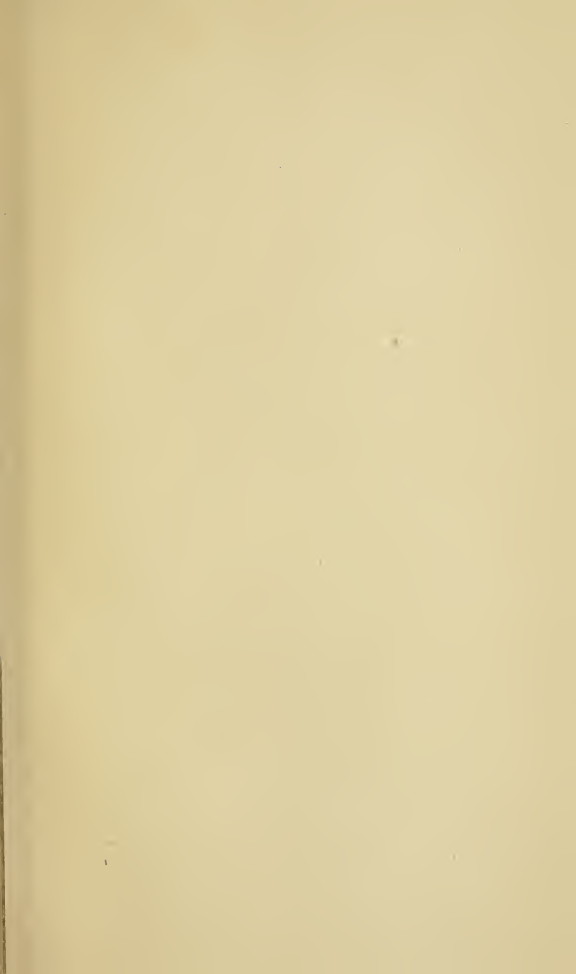


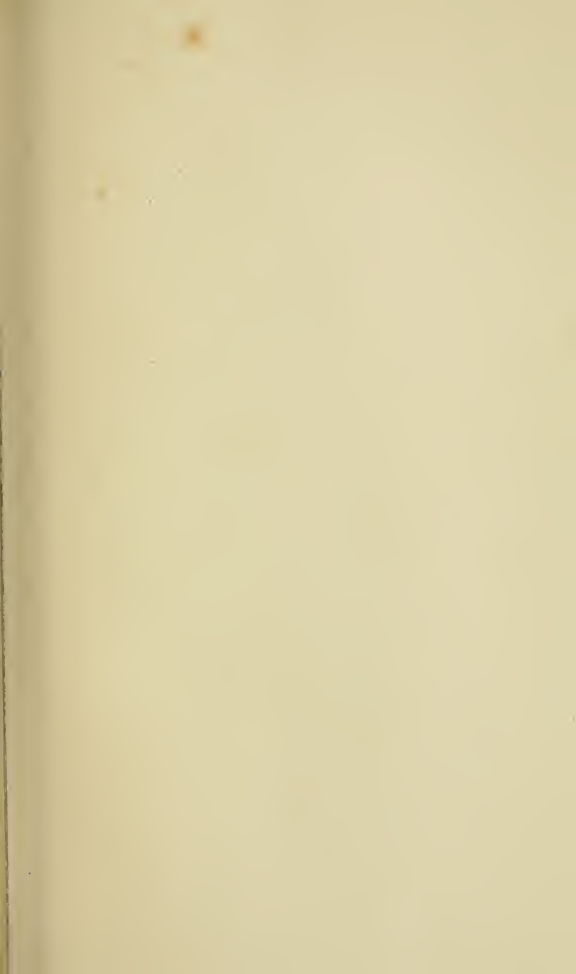


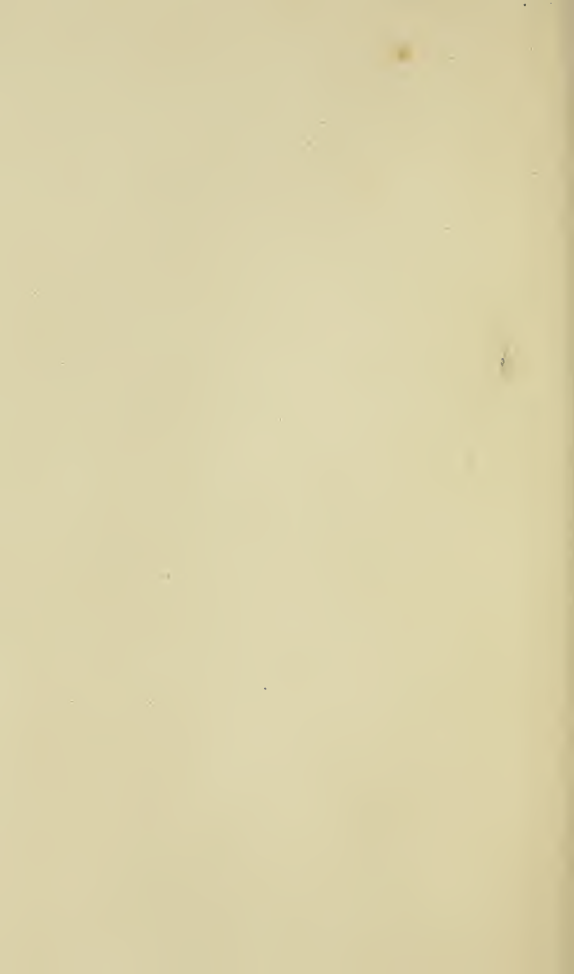






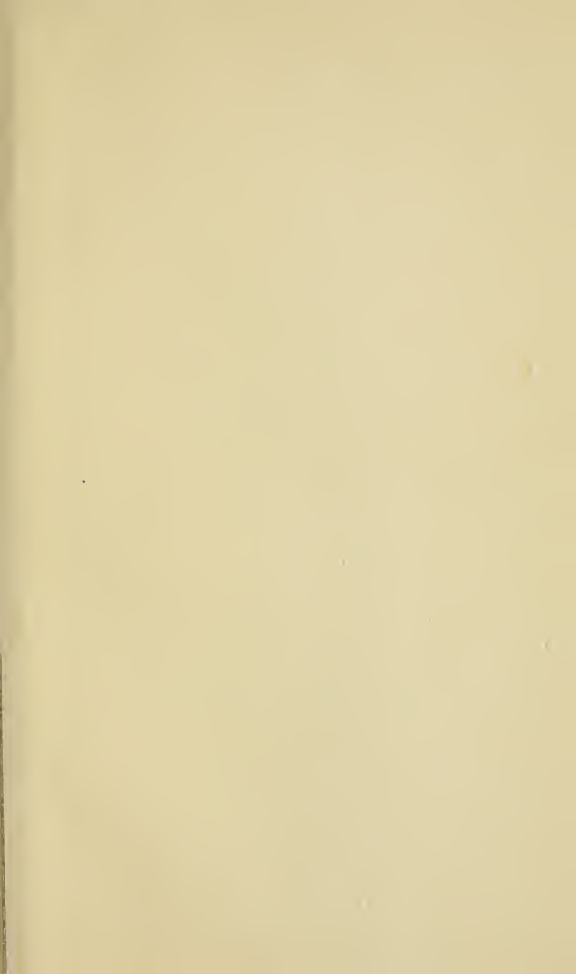










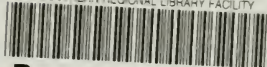






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